

Garlock, JohnKeys To Better Preaching

9. How Is A Sermon Organized?

This chapter teaches the basic structure of a sermon. Every sermon automatically has three parts—introduction, body, and conclusion—but if left to chance they fail. The heart of the chapter is the body: it needs a clear outline (a simple list of main ideas), and it explains the common types of sermon structure.

Key takeaways

- Every sermon has three parts: the introduction (grabs attention, makes people want to listen), the body (the main ideas you stood up to say), and the conclusion (calls people to respond and apply the message).
- Build the body by listing your main ideas, then noting a strong illustration for each. That list is your outline.
- Structure is what makes the whole sermon memorable; illustrations only help people remember one single point.
- Three types of sermon: textual (points taken straight from the Bible text), topical (points from logical divisions of a subject), and expository (textual, but on a longer passage with deeper digging). A mix is called textual-topical.

- Check your outline appeals to all three parts of a person: intellect (something to think), emotions (something to feel), and will (something to decide).
- Good points can use novelty, alliteration, parallel grammar, parallel importance, or logical order—but never distort your message just to get a catchy outline.

Passages worth keeping

“Structure is the basket you give them to carry the eggs away safely.”

The chapter's core image—without structure, listeners can't gather and keep the truths you hand them.

Scripture referenced

- **Micah 6:8** -- Example of a textual sermon—points (justice, mercy, humility) drawn straight from the verse, appealing to intellect, emotion, and will.
- **John 3:16** -- Example of a topical sermon on the subject of love, with points not all found in the text.
- **Psalms 1** -- Example of reordering the text's ideas to end on a positive note.